

**Univerzita Karlova**

**Filozofická fakulta**

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# **Bakalářská práce**

**Ethics and Religion in George Orwell's *A Clergyman's Daughter***  
Etika a náboženství v Orwelově románu *Farářova dcera*

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Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně, že jsem řádně citovala všechny použité prameny a literaturu a že práce nebyla využita v rámci jiného vysokoškolského studia či k získání jiného či stejného titulu.

V Praze dne 12.8.2020

Podpis .....

I declare that the following BA thesis is my own work for which I used only the sources and literature mentioned, and that this thesis has not been used in the course of other university studies, or in order to acquire the same or another type of diploma.

Prague, 12 August 2020

Signature .....

**Klíčová slova**

Britská literatura, Bildungsroman, George Orwell, křesťanství, etika

**Key Words**

British Literature, Bildungsroman, George Orwell, Christianity, ethics

## Abstrakt

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá vztahem George Orwella k náboženství v jeho raném románu *Farářova dcera* (1935). Hlavním předmětem zkoumání této práce je hlavní postava, její ztráta víry a zkoumání obrazu ideální křesťanky, kterou představuje, v kontrastu s duchovními a dalšími postavami příběhu. Dorothy Hare je slušnou mladou dívkou před i po ztrátě víry, nepotřebuje tedy vnější podnět pro své chování. Orwell kritizuje církevní systém založený na protichůdných tvrzeních v Bibli a nedostatek pravé křesťanské víry kněží.

Nejprve jsou popsány autorovy rané zkušenosti s náboženstvím, které získal na školách, které navštěvoval a vliv, jenž na něj tyto instituce měly v pozdějším životě, následované analýzou románu *Farářova dcera*. Jednotlivé kapitoly jsou rozebrány samostatně, neboť každá z nich popisuje oddělenou zkušenost, která hlavní hrdinku utváří.

První kapitola ukazuje každodenní útrapy Dorothy, mezi něž patří náročné požadavky jejího otce, faráře Anglikánské farnosti, žádosti jednotlivých duchovních a denní návštěvy věřících. Orwell zde kritizuje církev jako celek a její rituální formálnost. V druhé kapitole Dorothy dočasně ztrácí vzpomínky, víru i své vlastní morální zásady. Ty jsou jasně zřetelné v ostatních částech příběhu jakožto kontrolní mechanismus chování hlavní hrdinky postrádající bolest z nekonečných trestů, které si sama určila, aby byla dobrou křesťankou podle církevního učení. Třetí kapitola představuje experiment s dramatickou formou v imitaci *Ulyses* od Jamese Joyce, kterého Orwell velmi obdivoval. Tyto dvě kapitoly nabízejí vhled do prostředí postrádajícího přísný morální kodex církve, ale o mnoho větší ochotu pomáhat jeden druhému v nouzi. Čtvrtá kapitola je kritikou nejenom náboženství, ale také systému anglických soukromých škol určených k vydělávání peněz spíše než vzdělávání. Tato kritika je vidět především v přehnané postavě ředitelky školy a střetu touhy hlavní hrdinky pomáhat druhým a útlakem ze strany rodičů studentů školy, kteří si přejí, aby jejich potomci byli vzděláváni v praktických dovednostech, nebo jinými slovy, aby se jejich ratolesti vzdělávaly především v oblastech, které nabízejí okamžitý výsledek s možností kontroly. Pátá kapitola pak zakončuje cestu Dorothy Hare pokusem o zodpovězení základní otázky významu víry a následcích její ztráty.

Orwell při psaní této knihy hodně čerpal ze svých vlastních zkušeností z chmelové brigády, času stráveného v komunitě bezdomovců v Londýně a ze své krátké učitelské kariéry na chlapecké škole.

## Abstract

This thesis explores George Orwell's relationship to and critique of religion in his early novel *A Clergyman's Daughter* (1935). The main focus is the protagonist and her loss of faith and an explanation of the image of an ideal Christian she represents contrasted with the clergymen and other characters found in the story. Dorothy Hare is a decent young woman both before and after her loss of faith, meaning she does not need an external incentive for her behaviour. Orwell made a point of criticising the ecclesiastical system based upon contradictory instructions of the Bible and the lack of true Christian belief and kindness among the priests.

The thesis first introduces the writer's early experience with religion at schools he attended and describes the effect the institutions had on Orwell in later life, followed by the analysis of the novel *A Clergyman's Daughter*. Each chapter of the novel is analysed separately, as each of the five chapters represents a different formative experience for the protagonist.

The first chapter shows Dorothy's everyday hardships, as she is subject to the demands of her father, the Rector of an Anglican parish, as well as the requests of the other clergymen and the parishioners she visits every day, and shows Orwell's general criticism of the Church and its ritualistic formality. In the second chapter, Dorothy undergoes a reset of character, temporarily losing her memory, faith and even her innate moral code that is otherwise ever-present throughout the novel as a control mechanism of the protagonist's behaviour, devoid of the endless punishments the protagonist set for herself in order to be a good Christian in accordance with the Church doctrine. The third chapter experiments with the dramatic form, imitating *Ulysses* by James Joyce, whom Orwell greatly admired. The two chapters offer insight into a social environment devoid of the rigid moral code of the Church yet much more willing to help others in the same predicament. The fourth chapter further criticizes not only religion but the English private school system built upon money-making rather than education, in a greatly exaggerated school principal figure and the clash of the protagonist's heartfelt desire to help others with oppression from parents who only wish their children to be taught practical subjects, or in other words, subjects that yield quick results that are easily visible. The fifth chapter concludes the journey of Dorothy Hare in an attempt at answering the fundamental question of the importance of faith and the consequences of its loss.

Orwell used his own experience of working in a hop-picking community, and his time spent among the homeless in London as well as his teaching experience in an all-boys school in the novel.



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## 1. Introduction

Eric Arthur Blair, widely known under his pen name, George Orwell, is celebrated mainly for his political fiction writing, his most famous works being *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). *Animal Farm* was Orwell's first absolute success and quickly made him "a best-selling author not only in Britain, but in the United States and other parts of the world."<sup>1</sup> *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was Orwell's "last and most powerful novel" which he wrote while suffering from tuberculosis and "looking for a wife" that would "take care of his literary estate."<sup>2</sup> While he did find a wife in the end, marrying the much younger editorial assistant Sonia Brownell only a few months before his death, the sad fact remains that his "literary success came too late and he knew it."<sup>3</sup>

What the general public usually overlooks, though, are Orwell's early novels and most readers would most likely be unaware of his fascination with religion stemming from his childhood experience, as the writer "simply could not leave religion alone."<sup>4</sup> One would hardly expect that an author that famous spent a large part of "his life anticipating failure."<sup>5</sup> While most people will think of the sinister watchful eye of Big Brother<sup>6</sup> or the uprising of animals at Manor Farm<sup>7</sup> with regard to George Orwell, if asked about *A Clergyman's Daughter* (1935), one would most likely be met with confusion, as it is probably the most forgotten of Orwell's novels, partially due to the author's own efforts at suppression of future editions, as he refused to allow its republishing.<sup>8</sup> Yet, this early novel clearly shows us what religious questions the writer was preoccupied with, tracking his own life experience as a teacher, a tramp and a hop picker, and is evidence to Orwell's temporary obsession with *Ulysses*. Unfortunately, the "enthusiasm for James Joyce's *Ulysses*"<sup>9</sup> he initially felt was later replaced by feelings of "inferiority" as he "could not help

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Shelden, *Orwell: The Authorized Biography*, 1st ed. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991) 364.

<sup>2</sup> Mitzi M. Brunsdale, *Student Companion to George Orwell* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2000) 137.

<sup>3</sup> Brunsdale 137.

<sup>4</sup> Michael G. Brennan, *George Orwell and Religion* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017) xi.

<sup>5</sup> Shelden 1.

<sup>6</sup> Brunsdale 140.

<sup>7</sup> Brunsdale 123.

<sup>8</sup> Christopher Hollis, *A Study of George Orwell: The Man and His Works*, foreword by John Rodden, PhD (Delaware: Racehorse Publishing, 2017) V. n.p.

<sup>9</sup> Shelden 145.

disliking his own work more after observing Joyce's masterful handling of the elements of fiction."<sup>10</sup>

This thesis focuses on George Orwell's complicated relationship with religion, mainly discussing the protagonist of the novel, Dorothy Hare, and her journey which critics have described as the "study of faith and loss of faith."<sup>11</sup> The protagonist of the novel, while raised in Christian belief, does not need the Christian doctrine in itself, as we shall see that she is a naturally pious soul, or in other words, an ideal Christian, in her innate kindness and undiminished desire to help others in need. Dorothy Hare is portrayed as devoid of selfishness and, mainly in the final chapter of the novel, revealed to possess a deep desire to figure out the ultimate meaning of life outside the frame of faith. At the same time, she appreciates the beauty of nature, although misguided for years to only interpret such pleasures as manifestations of God's love due to her lack of critical thinking, as she unwaveringly believes in the Christian teaching. This thesis shall follow Dorothy's journey filled with obstacles and discuss the implications of various key moments in the text to uncover Orwell's strategies of critiquing the hypocrisy of everyday religious communities, tracing these critical elements into the ultimate conclusion Dorothy draws about life and faith at the very end of the novel. While Orwell's signature class-system critique is naturally quite prominent and tied to his critique of religion, this thesis will focus predominantly on the religious critique in this novel.

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<sup>10</sup> Sheldon 187.

<sup>11</sup> Hollis V. n.p.

## 2. George Orwell and Religion

Faith often offers comfort to people. It gives them something they can believe in and depend on when life becomes too difficult. However, George Orwell's relationship with religion was difficult throughout his whole life. He called himself an atheist, or more specifically "an atheist [who] yet retained a highly religious sense of morality' and insistently sought for a 'morality suitable for a post-Christian age.'"<sup>12</sup> As a little boy, Eric Blair attended Henley-on-Thames, a school opened by a convent of Catholic nuns, the French Ursulines who were exiled from France.<sup>13</sup> There are no known records from this period in Blair's life except for brief notes in his book-length, posthumously published autobiographical essay "Such, Such Were the Joys" (1953) about a romantic interest in one of the girls "at his local 'convent school.'"<sup>14</sup> While there is no direct evidence for this, it is probable Blair's stay at the school was a primary reason for his distrust of Catholicism.<sup>15</sup> Another formative element of Orwell's hatred of the Catholic faith was "the Reverend Conrad Noel" who was "strongly anti-Catholic" and "opposed to the Anglo-Catholics who copied Rome."<sup>16</sup>

From 1911, Eric Blair attended "a private Anglican preparatory school, St Cyprian's at Eastbourne, East Sussex."<sup>17</sup> In St Cyprian's, Blair became deeply familiar with the Bible in detail but hated the teachers and the hostile environment he had to live in.<sup>18</sup> In his ironically titled autobiographical essay "Such, Such Were the Joys", Blair describes some of his experience at the school, mostly the omnipresent violence and repression. While his previous experience with religion is shrouded in mystery, the essay discloses that in his youth, until the fourteenth year of age, he believed in God.<sup>19</sup> However, even at this tender age, Blair realized that what he was taught was interspersed with contradictions:

But the whole business of religion seemed to be strewn with psychological impossibilities. The Prayer Book told you, for example, to love God and fear him: but how could you love

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<sup>12</sup> Brennan x.

<sup>13</sup> Brennan 6.

<sup>14</sup> Brennan 7.

<sup>15</sup> Brennan 8.

<sup>16</sup> Brennan 5.

<sup>17</sup> Brennan 8.

<sup>18</sup> Brennan 8.

<sup>19</sup> George Orwell, "Such, Such Were the Joys" (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1953). 29 Dec 2019 <[https://www.orwell.ru/library/essays/joys/english/e\\_joys](https://www.orwell.ru/library/essays/joys/english/e_joys)> V. n.p. 12 Aug 2020.

someone whom you feared? With your private affections it was the same. What you *ought* to feel was usually clear enough but the appropriate emotion could not be commanded.<sup>20</sup>

A most complicated matter for a child to understand, yet the understanding of the world and of religion as it was taught was built upon such contradictions. It seems understandable that a person profoundly thinking about life should grow to become an atheist, as Blair “later told Christopher Hollis that he had merely accepted ‘mechanically the Christian religion without having any sort of affection for it.’”<sup>21</sup> The dissociation between the plain following of a routine, the “mechanical” aspect of Christian religion, and its actual teachings, marks a problem that the future adult Orwell will explore in his second, and perhaps least known novel, *A Clergyman’s Daughter*, which is the subject of this thesis.

The young Blair was facing a difficult problem of understanding religion in a logical way, a way he could understand and internalize, but failing repeatedly to do so, as religion is fundamentally not meant to be questioned, and logical enquiry in the confines of a Church-run school, whichever denomination that might be, is most likely to result in being silenced or even punished. There is no one correct answer to why a person believes, as there is to a mathematical problem, for instance, or even a philosophical problem for that matter. Moreover, Blair attended prestigious schools, surrounded by better-off peers, in which he was taught religion by teachers mainly interested in prestige and money, rather than the actual teachings of Christianity.<sup>22</sup>

The various codes which were presented to you at St Cyprian’s — religious, moral social and intellectual — contradicted one another if you worked out their implications. The essential conflict was between the tradition of nineteenth-century asceticism and the actually existing luxury and snobbery of the pre-1914 age. On the one side were low-church Bible Christianity, sex puritanism, insistence on hard work, respect for academic distinction, disapproval of self-indulgence: on the other, contempt for ‘braininess’, and worship of games, contempt for foreigners and the working class, an almost neurotic dread of poverty, and, above all, the assumption not only that money and privilege are the things that matter, but that it is better to inherit them than to have to work for them.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Orwell, “Such, Such Were the Joys” V. n.p.

<sup>21</sup> Brennan 1.

<sup>22</sup> Orwell, “Such, Such Were the Joys” V. n.p.

<sup>23</sup> Orwell, “Such, Such Were the Joys” V. n.p.

The young Eric Blair was able to accept the physical punishments without much problem, but being humiliated or undervalued was much worse.<sup>24</sup> The boarding school experience “scarred him for life” and the “outrage” he felt lasted for a long time.<sup>25</sup> The living conditions at St Cyprian’s were also particularly bad; Blair was constantly reminded of an exam important for acquiring a scholarship as if his life depended on it, while the school was only interested in gaining prestige out of Blair, whose parents did not have enough money to afford the tuition.<sup>26</sup>

After Blair enrolled at another prime educational institution, Eton College, he became rebellious and “maintained that, as an Etonian, he was an anarchical prig, an idler and despised by the other boys for his poverty.”<sup>27</sup> While Christopher Hollis believes that Blair was exaggerating in his work *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936), when he wrote that “probably the greatest cruelty one can inflict on a child [...] is to send it to school among children richer than itself,” already as George Orwell, it is probable that the years of bad experience made him oversensitive to any criticism of his poverty or the remark may have referenced mainly the personal experience at St Cyprian’s.<sup>28</sup> It is something only Blair himself could truly know.

Even after leaving school, Orwell believed that “the teaching of the Catholic Church was clearly false” yet he understood the value of religion in giving people reason to “behave decently.”<sup>29</sup> He was “fully conscious of the difficulty of finding a sound basis for ethics” and, according to Christopher Hollis in his *A Study of George Orwell: The Man and His Works*, there exist those who have to behave decently in order to be happy but experience showed Orwell that there are many who do not feel that need.<sup>30</sup> Orwell claimed in his essay “Looking back on the Spanish War” (1943) that “The major problem of our time is the decay of the belief in personal immortality.”<sup>31</sup> Hollis believes that Orwell found religion “valueless” rather than

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<sup>24</sup> Orwell, “Such, Such Were the Joys” I. n.p.

<sup>25</sup> Hollis Foreword n.p.

<sup>26</sup> Orwell, “Such, Such Were the Joys” II. n.p.

<sup>27</sup> Hollis II. n.p.

<sup>28</sup> Hollis II. n.p.

<sup>29</sup> Hollis IV. n.p.

<sup>30</sup> Hollis IV. n.p.

<sup>31</sup> George Orwell, “Looking Back on the Spanish War,” *New Road*, June 1943

<<https://www.orwellfoundation.com/the-orwell-foundation/orwell/essays-and-other-works/looking-back-on-the-spanish-war/>> 12 Aug 2020 n.p.

“false”, as Orwell did not think anyone truly believed its teachings and, thus it simply could not have the power to bring people to behave morally.<sup>32</sup>

The novel, *A Clergyman's Daughter*, reflects not only the experience of George Orwell when it comes to various church organisations and institutions, but also his beliefs about religion and ethics, and, crucially, the dissociation between the class-oriented and class-dictated morality of various so-called religious communities and actual Christian teachings or principles. Orwell attempted to figure out the answer to “the question of the claims of religion and of the nature and place of faith.”<sup>33</sup> However, as Hollis claims, “he certainly did not answer it to his own satisfaction.”<sup>34</sup> Dorothy, Orwell's woe-ridden protagonist and the titular clergyman's daughter, is a kind-hearted, hard-working young woman who very much seems to fit the image of an ideal Christian. In the foreword of *A Study of George Orwell* which was written by John Rodden, he claims that what Hollis found once he looked beyond the “atheism” and “anti-Catholicism” of George Orwell was in, Hollis' own words, “a naturally Christian soul.”<sup>35</sup> There seems to be no better description for the protagonist of *A Clergyman's Daughter*. Dorothy does not need religious doctrine (whose only effect on her is a self-conscious proclivity to self-harm and chastisement ready to pounce at all times at the slightest inkling of wrong-doing, as we glean from her inner thoughts), as she possesses “natural piety” which Lionel Trilling critically assigned to Orwell, who, in his opinion, seemed to “have had no religious tendency in his nature.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Hollis IV. n.p.

<sup>33</sup> Hollis V. n.p.

<sup>34</sup> Hollis V. n.p.

<sup>35</sup> Hollis Foreword n.p.

<sup>36</sup> Brennan xiii.

### 3. *A Clergyman's Daughter*

*A Clergyman's Daughter* is an early novel by George Orwell published on 11 March 1935.<sup>37</sup> It can be somewhat difficult to come across these days and it is mostly unknown to the reading public. The reason for this is not only the fact that it is not the best of Orwell's works but also the result of Orwell's own deliberate efforts to destroy every possible copy of the book he could find and suppress later editions in his lifetime.<sup>38</sup> The novel was formally influenced by the modernist masterpiece *Ulysses* by James Joyce which Orwell read not too long before writing this novel.<sup>39</sup> Christopher Hitchens in his essay "Joyce in Bloom" voices an opinion that the source of the title of Orwell's novel is the following line from *Ulysses*: "Go to! You spent most of it in Georgina Johnson's bed, clergyman's daughter."<sup>40</sup> According to Hollis, Orwell explored in this book "the question of the claims of religion and the nature and place of faith", but failed to answer it "to his own satisfaction."<sup>41</sup>

The protagonist of the "study of faith and the loss of faith" that is Orwell's second novel is a young woman Dorothy Hare.<sup>42</sup> The book is divided into "five phases."<sup>43</sup> In each of these phases, Dorothy is gathering experience guided by other characters that influence her on her journey and, in the end, she loses her faith completely.

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<sup>37</sup> Brennan 41.

<sup>38</sup> Hollis V. n.p.

<sup>39</sup> Brennan 41.

<sup>40</sup> Christopher Hitchens, "Joyce in Bloom," Vanityfair.com, *Vanity Fair*, 1 Apr 2011 <<https://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2004/06/hitchens-200406>> 12 Aug 2020.

<sup>41</sup> Hollis V. n.p.

<sup>42</sup> Hollis V. n.p.

<sup>43</sup> Hollis V. n.p.



### 3.1. Modernist Features

*A Clergyman's Daughter* is an “experimental late-modernist novel” with “disparate thematic components.”<sup>44</sup> There are several “formal characteristics” of modernism that can be found in the novel, including “emphasis on the fragment, inconsequential events,” “*in medias res* beginnings,” and “incomplete endings.”<sup>45</sup> The first and longest chapter of the novel portrays a day in the life of Dorothy Hare in a playful but linguistically much toned-down imitation of *Ulysses*.<sup>46</sup> Several chapters begin “*in medias res*” or “in the midst of the action.”<sup>47</sup> In the third chapter, as Dorothy finds herself on the verge of regaining consciousness, the scene turns strange in what could be a dream or hallucination.<sup>48</sup> The narrator turns unreliable in accordance with Dorothy’s perception of reality. It is also an attempt to imitate “Joyce’s manipulations of disconnected dialogues in *Ulysses*.”<sup>49</sup> The novel ends without Dorothy finding an answer to her search for the meaning of life and religious truth, in another introspective episodic study, while keeping to a mundane manual task, in this case Dorothy making paper costumes for the fundraising village pageant, accompanied by the somewhat epiphanic boiling pot of glue.

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<sup>44</sup> Carrie Kancilia, “Ageing Anxieties in George Orwell’s ‘The Clergyman’s Daughter,’” *Modernistreviewcouk.wordpress.com*, *The Modernist Review*, 3rd Jul 2020. <<https://modernistreviewcouk.wordpress.com/2020/07/03/ageing-anxieties-in-george-orwells-the-clergymans-daughter/#more-2165>> 12 Aug 2020.

<sup>45</sup> Suzanne Hobson, “Modernism,” *Oxfordbibliographies.com*, *Oxford Bibliographies*, 15 Jun 2017 <<https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199846719/obo-9780199846719-0042.xml>> 12 Aug 2020.

<sup>46</sup> Brennan 42.

<sup>47</sup> J.A. Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 5th ed., revised by M. A. R. Habib, Associate Eds. M. Birchwood et al. (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013) 362.

<sup>48</sup> Hollis V. n.p.

<sup>49</sup> Brennan 44.

### 3.2. Christianity

David Bashevkin explored religious motivation in his article “Jonah and the Varieties of Religious Motivation,” differentiating two motives – either the person is seeking “religious truth” or “comfort.”<sup>50</sup> He analyses the biblical story of Jonah, the prophet who ran away from his task of bringing the citizens of Nineveh back to God since he was dismayed at the prospect of someone turning to God out of fear for his own life.<sup>51</sup> In the end, after a tempestuous journey during which Jonah is swallowed by a whale and then spat out again, God provides the prophet with the comfort of a tree shade only to take it away soon after to show Jonah that comfort is important as well.<sup>52</sup>

Comfort, God reminds Jonah, is a need inherent in the human condition. The comfort provided by a tree no more obscures the role of God, than the comfort that religion provides. The means through which we find solace need not obscure the ultimate source from which all comfort derives.<sup>53</sup>

The belief in one’s immortality is one of the comforts Christianity offers as all sentient creatures fear death. The Bible says: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”<sup>54</sup> Bashevkin also notes upon *History of Natural Religion* by David Hume who believed “that religion began not in search for truth, but rather in search for comfort.”<sup>55</sup>

However, Bashevkin argues that the ideal lies in the opposite, as he reads *Laws of Repentance* written by Maimonides on the subject of religion in general:

The ideal form of religious commitment, according to Maimonides, is founded upon truth as

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<sup>50</sup> David Bashevkin, “Jonah and the Varieties of Religious Motivation,” Thelehrhaus.com, *The Lehrhaus*, 9 Oct 2016 <<https://thelehrhaus.com/scholarship/jonah-and-the-varieties-of-religious-motivation/>> paragraph II, 12 Aug 2020.

<sup>51</sup> Bashevkin, paragraph II.

<sup>52</sup> Bashevkin, paragraph III.

<sup>53</sup> Bashevkin, paragraph III.

<sup>54</sup> John 3:16, Biblegateway.com, *Bible Gateway*

<<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3%3A16&version=ESV>> 12 Aug 2020.

<sup>55</sup> Bashevkin, paragraph II.

opposed to the solace religion proves in the face of calamity. Of course, he readily concedes, most will never achieve such purity of motivation – but it stands as an ideal nonetheless.<sup>56</sup>

When placing the protagonist of *A Clergyman's Daughter* on a scale between truth and comfort, Dorothy rarely seeks comfort from religion. Before her loss of memory, Dorothy punishes herself when she catches herself praying for anything that could make her difficult life a little easier yet she offers comfort to others daily. Once Dorothy loses her faith, she feels the need to figure out the deeper meaning of life. She is naturally an ideal Christian yet she breaches the Christian teaching by no longer believing in existence of God.

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<sup>56</sup> Bashevkin, paragraph II.

### 3.3. Chapter 1

The first and longest part of the novel portrays a day in the life of a clergyman's daughter, Dorothy Hare, in an imitation of *Ulysses*.<sup>57</sup> The reader is suddenly thrown into the small rural world of Dorothy, who is being woken from her sleep by an insistent alarm clock, a scene every modern human being is familiar with and can immediately sympathize with. What one does not usually do, though, is chastise oneself by reciting excerpts from the Bible in one's mind. The first impression that we get is an internalized image of a deeply pious girl, gathering strength to get out of bed on time, like a good Christian. However, the real reason she gets up is her fear of the anger of her father, the petty and extremely self-obsessed clergyman of Knype Hill, a village in Suffolk. This inner conflict and final motivation making Dorothy act contrasts and foreshadows what the life of this girl is really like. The protagonist does remind herself of the Bible but it is not the decisive factor for her. Rather it appears to be a reflex acquired over a long period of time, instilled in her by her needy father and the needs of the small community she grew up in.

As is soon shown, the faith motivating and guiding the protagonist at every turn, as we learn from her inner thoughts, often related in a form of a chastisement or dialogue reminding herself of not breaching this or that particular principle, is not bringing her happiness. Quite on the contrary, the conditions for being a good Christian as Dorothy sees it are quite impossible to meet for a human being, resulting in incessant self-admonition and subsequent suffering. Orwell had the experience of others imposing beliefs on him that he as a child simply accepted as the truth, but always struggled with. As can be read in his autobiographical essay "Such, Such Were the Joys": "A child accepts the codes of behaviour that are presented to it, even when it breaks them."<sup>58</sup>

What does this tell us about Dorothy and the meaning and everyday reality of her faith in Chapter 1? As a Rector's only daughter, Dorothy has been taught since she was a child the drill of Christianity as Mr Warburton, a person who has known Dorothy for a long time and a sort of her close friend, confirms in the dialogue with Dorothy in Chapter 5. Upon her mother's death, she replaced the servant-housekeeper-secretary role left vacant and tends to her father's many needs, most of

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<sup>57</sup> Brennan 42.

<sup>58</sup> "Such, Such Were the Joys" II. n.p.

which are either over-stated and pedantic at best, and downright oppressive and demeaning at worst. While the beliefs imposed upon Dorothy may be different from those young Eric Blair had to face, it does not change the fact that they both firmly believed them to be the truth and tried to reconcile the sheer moral and ethical chasm between those Christian teachings and the petty, selfish, class-ridden morality and lack of sympathy that the Church's institutions and the wider, ostensibly Christian, population of the middle and upper classes tended to exhibit on a daily basis.

During the Holy Communion scene, Dorothy has what she perceives to be a selfish wish, praying to God in hope to avoid drinking from a chalice at Holy Communion after Miss Mayfill, an old lady who attends the service regularly with "not the kind of mouth that you would like to see drinking out of your cup."<sup>59</sup> Dorothy sees this as "deadly blasphemy" and starts to experience what could be described as a panic attack once the chalice is presented to her, when something suddenly calms her mind:<sup>60</sup>

Then it happened that she glanced sidelong, through the open south door. A momentary spear of sunlight had pierced the clouds. [...] It was as though some jewel of unimaginable splendour had flashed for an instant, filling the doorway with green light, and then faded. A flood of joy ran through Dorothy's heart. The flash of living colour had brought back to her, by a process deeper than reason, her peace of mind, her love of God, her power of worship.<sup>61</sup>

Some may view a ray of light finding its way through clouds at exactly the right moment as a divine intervention, as it appears Dorothy herself interpreted the sudden calmness of her mind, her God-gifted renewed composure. However, sunlight shining through clouds is a common natural phenomenon and as can be seen in a later scene, the heroine feels simply drawn to nature and its beauty. Thus, we are left to speculate whether what really calmed her mind was the brief feeling of connection to nature rather than love of God. Orwell confirms this later when Dorothy temporarily gets lost in her own happiness in a meadow: "Her heart swelled with sudden joy. It was that mystical joy in the beauty of the earth and the very nature of things that she recognized, perhaps mistakenly, as the love of God."<sup>62</sup> Here and elsewhere, we can see that Orwell is positioning Dorothy's response to nature as something

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<sup>59</sup> George Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967) 12.

<sup>60</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 13.

<sup>61</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 13-14.

<sup>62</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 53.

fundamentally intimate and joyous, and leaves us with the ever-more-insistent questions as to whether these encounters are so inextricably tied to the “love of God.”

In the first chapter, Dorothy experiences these two sudden surges of belief and love towards God but they are both equally connected to nature. In *George Orwell and Religion*, Michael G. Brennan describes the first instance as a “pantheistic flash of sunlight” that “revitalizes Dorothy’s body and soul.”<sup>63</sup> Most certainly, on one level, Dorothy interprets it in this fashion, making her capable of praying again, though she firmly connects the experience with God. At this point, when Dorothy still believes in the existence of God the way she has been taught by her father, the scenes can be interpreted as both pantheistic worship, i.e. the existence of the divine principle or principles manifest in the material reality of the universe,<sup>64</sup> and also their relating to the particular God of Christianity. Dorothy feels connection to nature, she appreciates its beauty and loses herself for a moment in genuine happiness, yet her mind still connects her experience to God. This appreciation of nature is clearly drawn from and harkens back to Blair’s “childish delight in nature” he shared with Jacintha Buddicom.<sup>65</sup> She was his childhood friend who also regarded “herself as a teenage pantheist”.<sup>66</sup>

The punishments Dorothy sets for herself as a result of any little faltering or what she regards as her own selfish thoughts go beyond common religious piety, however. Most often, Dorothy sticks a pin into her forearm as an instant punishment. Sometimes, she postpones her punishment, depriving herself of something enjoyable instead. Obviously, nobody is able to control his or her thoughts and make himself or herself flawless, so the young woman resorts to punishing herself several times a day for any “irreverence and sacrilegious thoughts.”<sup>67</sup> However, her actions seem compulsive and not done in anticipation of a better afterlife for being obedient and selfless, but rather conform to a familiar habit of self-harm.

In Dorothy’s thoughts, to which Orwell gives us nigh constant access, doubt about the existence of God sometimes appears: “Now then, Dorothy! No sniveling, please! It all comes right somehow if you trust in God. Matthew vi, 25. The Lord will

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<sup>63</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 42.

<sup>64</sup> William L. Reese, “Pantheism,” Britannica.com, *Encyclopaedia Britannica* <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/pantheism>> 12 Aug 2020.

<sup>65</sup> Brennan 42.

<sup>66</sup> Brennan 10.

<sup>67</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 11.

provide. *Will He?*”<sup>68</sup> A passing thought following Dorothy’s usual exhortation reveals her doubts about God’s existence and universal love when it comes to the basics of life and making ends meet. This is not surprising in pragmatic terms, as she is working from early morning until very late evening every day, burdened by problems caused by her father, never getting any help, always being exploited even by the people of the town, on top of her father’s many daily requirements. A young woman full of life would obviously not choose to spend her days in the old, stuffy houses of the town folk, we might think, and wonder why Dorothy is so compliant with it all. The self-effacing routine is deeply ingrained in her, though, and her mind seems unable to consider anything else than the problems she has to face every day. Therefore, she does not rebel, but the pressure does inevitably lead to her mind giving out in full amnesia in Chapter 2. Yet, this is a point for plot-structure criticism for Hollis:

One day is much the same as any other in Dorothy’s life. She is not conscious of being under any strain that is likely to lead to a breakdown at its end. Nothing happens that is even unusual except Mr. Warburton’s kissing of her and, repugnant as that was, it was not his first attempt at seduction. If Orwell wished to give us a picture of the strain and futility of life against which her subconscious was reacting, he should have more tightly.<sup>69</sup>

It is difficult to judge if every single day of Dorothy’s was *exactly* the same. There are bills accumulated to a certain amount, one of them, the butcher’s, high enough to cause her “physical pang” from worry.<sup>70</sup> Physical pain seems to be evidence enough of how much stress Dorothy is under. The household bills obviously had to grow over certain period of time, increasing the young woman’s anxiety over time. The monotony of her everyday visits could add up over time as well, adding to the strain which can plausibly explain the memory loss. Here we are working with the coherence, or lack thereof, of the plot in the published, heavily censored version, of course, but more of that a little later, as crucial parts of Orwell’s novel had to be left out or rewritten in order to secure publication.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 31, My emphasis.

<sup>69</sup> Hollis V. n.p.

<sup>70</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 8.

<sup>71</sup> Shelden 200.

Dorothy was surrounded by Christianity since her birth, so she never made the conscious choice to join the Church and seemingly does not gain anything by her faith but an inherent sense of duty to serve her father and others, and an inordinate amount of stress and pain. Unfortunately, it is not until the very last chapter of the novel that we find out how much faith truly meant for Dorothy. Before going further into the analysis of the residents of Knype Hill, it needs to be briefly established what Christianity can bring to the believer, in ideal terms. Apart from belonging in a greater community of like-minded people who help each other, believers also receive a promise of an eternal life in Heaven if they behave morally on Earth: “To those who by patiently doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality will be eternal life.”<sup>72</sup> Christianity provides a goal and a reward as well as a guideline helping the faithful on their journey to reaching it, building a better community of caring and mutually sympathetic human beings. Needless to say, the failure of these ideals in reality is the very subject of Orwell’s critique in this novel, as we shall see from the following reading of the main characters and their various but invariably flawed agendas.

### 3.3.1. Dorothy’s Father

Dorothy’s father is “Charles Hare, the Rector of St Athelstan’s, Knype Hill, Suffolk.”<sup>73</sup> He is a clergyman of “a Low Church East Anglian parish.”<sup>74</sup> According to Brennan, this character “represents the deadening impact of the minor aristocracy on English society.”<sup>75</sup> In the novel itself, the family situation is described as follows: “He had been born in 1871, the younger son of the younger son of a baronet, and had gone into the Church for the out-moded reason that the Church is the traditional profession for younger sons.”<sup>76</sup> From the aforementioned quotation we can gather that Charles Hare was most likely not that enthusiastic about religion and faith, otherwise it would have been mentioned in the narrator’s summed-up introduction relating to his background. It also reflects what the Rector is like as a priest. While he is described as very “correct” in performing his “clerical duties,” he is clearly only able to do the

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<sup>72</sup> Romans 2:7.

<sup>73</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 5.

<sup>74</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 20.

<sup>75</sup> Brennan 42.

<sup>76</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 19.



mechanical and performative part expected of him.<sup>77</sup> However, a priest should also show “compassion, care and kindness of the Good Shepherd,” as is delineated in the “Guidelines” of the Church of England.<sup>78</sup> At this part Hare fails miserably, as he rubbishes everyone in town, gambles unsuccessfully at the stock market and does not even realize or indeed care, which is worse, that he is working his daughter to the bone. He seems, all in all, to represent all that a man of clergy should not be, character-wise. It is also unclear how much faith in God he himself truly has. His behaviour is more that of a vain aristocrat or a wealthy landowner while he is but a modest priest of very limited means. This could come from his family background but he is not the one owning an aristocratic title, not being even a legitimate son of a baronet, which means he cannot be considered part of even the lowest ranked aristocracy.<sup>79</sup> Despite all that, he expects high quality food for his meals and spent a large sum on a new organ while he owes money to “nearly every tradesman in the town” as if he was an aristocrat.<sup>80</sup> “The aristocratic, the expensive attitude was the one that in all circumstances came the most naturally to him.”<sup>81</sup> Moreover, even though Orwell presents the Rector as capable of performing his duties, he does not feel the need to hurry to christen a dying baby of “a common bricklayer.”<sup>82</sup> This practice of putting people into class-system casts is yet again against the “Guidelines” for the clergy: “[...] the clergy should offer equal respect and opportunity to all. They should be unbiased in their exercise of pastoral care, especially when caring for one party in a dispute between two or more people.”<sup>83</sup>

Notable is also his contempt or even downright hatred towards the pompous practices of the Anglo-Catholics who incline more towards the practices of the Roman Catholic Church. It seems to reflect in part the hatred of Orwell’s of Catholics which most likely stemmed from his experience at the convent school run by French Ursulines.<sup>84</sup> However, in a character who acts naturally with an “expensive

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<sup>77</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 20.

<sup>78</sup> “Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy,” Churchofengland.org, *The Church of England* <<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/policy-and-thinking/guidelines-professional-conduct-clergy/guidelines-professional-conduct>> paragraph 1.3, 12 Aug 2020.

<sup>79</sup> William D. Rubenstein, “The Evolution of the British Aristocracy in the Twentieth Century: Peerage Creations and the ‘Establishment’” <<https://books.openedition.org/editionsmslh/10025>> 245-257, paragraph 5, 12 Aug 2020.

<sup>80</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 26.

<sup>81</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 29.

<sup>82</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 26.

<sup>83</sup> “Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy,” paragraph 2.2.

<sup>84</sup> Brennan 6.

attitude,”<sup>85</sup> it feels out of place that he should dislike the lavishness of Roman Catholics.

Another example of the Rector’s failures as a clergyman would be his lack of appreciation for the efforts of the parishioners. The Harvest Festival, an opportunity for amateur gardeners to show the results of their hard work is considered a “ridiculous business” by Charles Hare.<sup>86</sup> Missing empathy and understanding altogether, rather than rejoicing at the accomplishment of his parishioner, Mr Toagis, who was beyond himself with joy when he managed to grow “a perfect leviathan of a pumpkin,” he drives him away by heartlessly calling the pumpkin “revolting.”<sup>87</sup> This attitude is not out of the ordinary, as the Rector came to Knype Hill “aged thirty-seven and with a temper incurably soured,” which resulted in him “alienating every man, woman, and child in the parish.”<sup>88</sup> While Mr Toagis himself was the one to have “gone chapel,”<sup>89</sup> the wealthier believers displeased with the Rector started attending Sunday service at either “St Edmund’s” or “St Wedekind’s,” both of the churches situated in “Millborough, five miles away.”<sup>90</sup> Orwell’s humorous characterisation reminds us of Dickens here.<sup>91</sup>

### 3.3.2. Victor Stone

Victor Stone is an Anglo-Catholic who failed to become a priest and so he at least works as “a Church schoolmaster and organist.”<sup>92</sup> As the Collins Dictionary explains, Anglo-Catholicism “emphasizes the Catholic elements in its teaching and practice.”<sup>93</sup> This is brought out to an extreme in this character lavishness of the rites and believes the service of Dorothy’s father is way too boring, emphasizing the blatant vanity of these men of the Church in Orwell’s dispassionate novel. Victor seems to represent one of the intelligent men swept away by the lure of Catholicism, which Orwell saw as “an intellectual fad” of the 1930s.<sup>94</sup> He is not a real believer and

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<sup>85</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 29.

<sup>86</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 22.

<sup>87</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 23.

<sup>88</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 19-20.

<sup>89</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 23.

<sup>90</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 21.

<sup>91</sup> Brennan 41.

<sup>92</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 59.

<sup>93</sup> Collinsdictionary.com, *Collins Dictionary*

<<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/anglo-catholic>> 12 Aug 2020.

<sup>94</sup> John Rodden, “Orwell on Religion: The Catholic and Jewish Questions,” *College Literature* 11.1 (1984): 47, JSTOR <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/25111578>> 12 Aug 2020.

in his argument with Dorothy can be seen the contrast of her honesty, defending her Father and faith and the hypocrisy of the schoolmaster: “‘Well, I don’t think vestments are so important as you do,’ said Dorothy. ‘I think it’s the spirit of the priest that matters, not the clothes he wears.’”<sup>95</sup>

### 3.3.3. Progett

Progett is another example of a clergyman who does not understand or pursue religion for the right reasons. He transposed faith into the material world, deciding that “the Church of Christ meant the actual walls, roof, and tower of St Athelstan’s, Knype Hill.”<sup>96</sup> Not only is his thinking completely misaligned, rather than bringing comfort, he seems to enjoy picturing the dire scenario of the church bell falling “through the belfry door into the church porch” when it is full of people.<sup>97</sup> Orwell is most likely showing his “affection for the buildings, ceremonies, and liturgies of the Anglican Church” while mocking the clergy at the same time.<sup>98</sup>

### 3.3.4. Father McGuire

A Catholic priest whom Dorothy passes by on her rounds appears in the story as a pure victim of Orwell’s satire, a clear evidence of his unrelenting hatred of Roman Catholics. Michael G. Brennan describes the character as “a cartoon figure” and “a farcically threatening presence.”<sup>99</sup> Dorothy’s hand “moved instinctively to the neighbourhood of the gold cross beneath her dress” as she sees him getting closer as if he was the Devil himself rather than a priest.<sup>100</sup> His physical appearance itself is ridiculous, being “so large that he dwarfed the bicycle beneath him and seemed to be balanced on top of it like a golfball on a tee.”<sup>101</sup> Apart from that, the priest is shown to be so self-important that he ignores Dorothy completely, as well as having had “a dispute with the Rector” which ended up in a fight at a funeral as “the two priests wrangled disgracefully over the open grave.”<sup>102</sup> Orwell was enjoying the mockery of

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<sup>95</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 64.

<sup>96</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 31.

<sup>97</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 32.

<sup>98</sup> Brennan x.

<sup>99</sup> Brennan 43.

<sup>100</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 54.

<sup>101</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 54.

<sup>102</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 54-55.

Roman Catholics so much that his editor had to ask him to remove some of the more flagrantly satirical references.<sup>103</sup>

### 3.3.5. Dorothy's Visits to the Parishioners and Mrs Pither

Dorothy dutifully visits the parishioners of Knype Hill every day, despite being aware that many of them are atheists.<sup>104</sup> These atheists reflect Orwell's somewhat problematic assumption that "the common people are without definite religious belief, and have been so for centuries."<sup>105</sup> However, exceptions can be found in the novel, as Mrs Pither and her husband are "one of the few genuinely pious couples."<sup>106</sup> The elderly woman suffering from rheumatism seems to be the only able to continue living since she strongly believes in a better life in Heaven: "In almost every moment of her life, the vision of Heaven supported and consoled her [...]"<sup>107</sup> One could say she is literally looking forward to dying, in Orwell's more biting moments of irony, reminiscent of Dickens.<sup>108</sup> Dorothy feels "strange uneasiness" about the "certitude" with which the old lady talks about the afterlife.<sup>109</sup> This feeling is not explained further. However, it is clear that Dorothy doubts the very words she preaches to the people of Knype Hill every day and possibly feels guilty even as she looks at someone who believes those words with such firmness. According to John Rodden in his essay "Orwell on Religion: The Catholic and Jewish Questions," Orwell "ridiculed" such people "for their superstitious faith."<sup>110</sup> The image of Mrs Pither and her husband is clearly a satire on people who believe the Bible unthinkingly and comfort themselves with the possibly false hope of the afterlife.

### 3.3.6. Mr Warburton

Mr Warburton represents freedom of choice Dorothy never had. He is a traveller; he does not care about what other people think of him and he is very liberal in his sexual life as well, trying to seduce any woman he possibly can. Dorothy considers him a friend despite his relentless attempts at seduction:

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<sup>103</sup> Brennan 43.

<sup>104</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 46.

<sup>105</sup> George Orwell in Rodden 53.

<sup>106</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 49.

<sup>107</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 51.

<sup>108</sup> Brennan 41.

<sup>109</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 52.

<sup>110</sup> Rodden 53.

Mr Warburton had given her a delightful tea, talked amusingly about books, and then, immediately after tea, sat down beside her on the sofa and begun making love to her, violently, outrageously, even brutally. It was practically an assault.<sup>111</sup>

A sound course of action after an experience like that would be for Dorothy to never meet Mr Warburton again. Rape, or attempted rape, is a harsh experience so it does not make sense that Dorothy is still willing to approach the man or even visit his house. Christopher Hollis points out that it is improbable that “a rector’s daughter [...] would have continued to visit Mr Warburton in the evenings after he had attempted to seduce her [...]”<sup>112</sup> However, while it is likely her naïve, trusting nature which believes the words of the repeated offender that another guest shall be present in his house that evening, things go awry. The possible explanation as to why Dorothy is still willing to approach Mr Warburton is simple attraction to the carefree lifestyle he leads. Since the relationship felt “implausible” to critics, Orwell added an explanation of his own,<sup>113</sup> that “the pious and the immoral drift naturally together.”<sup>114</sup> His character is the polar opposite of Dorothy’s not only in his lifestyle but his beliefs as well. Since he is an atheist, he says exactly what is on his mind and acts impulsively, contrary to Dorothy who often carefully considers her words and actions trapped in the belief that not doing so is sinful and deserving of punishment. The relationship of these two characters shows Dorothy’s longing for freedom from the unnatural realities of “organized religion” filled with “meaningless processes and traditions.”<sup>115</sup> The young woman is not even conscious of this attraction herself but it reminds one of a bird in a cage longingly watching the others flying free. This way, Dorothy is getting a glimpse of the world that is larger than her monotonous everyday reality.

On the textual level, the existence of Mr Warburton allows for dialogues concerning religion during which Dorothy’s beliefs are questioned. There are two of these dialogues between Dorothy and Mr Warburton in the novel. The first one occurs in Chapter 1, offering a deeper look into Dorothy’s original beliefs. The other can be found in the final chapter, presenting the new beliefs of Dorothy’s.

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<sup>111</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 40.

<sup>112</sup> Hollis V. n.p.

<sup>113</sup> Sheldon 200.

<sup>114</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 41.

<sup>115</sup> Brennan 43.

In the dialogue of Chapter 1 Mr Warburton playfully asks Dorothy whether she believes in Hell.<sup>116</sup> While the young woman replies in an affirmative and goes on to explain that “the existence of Hell is much more real and permanent than the existence of Australia” to her, it transpires that she is incapable of believing in Hell the way it is taught by the Church:<sup>117</sup>

She did indeed believe in Hell, but she had never been able to persuade herself that anyone actually *went* there. She believed that Hell existed, but that it was empty. Uncertain of the orthodoxy of this belief, she preferred to keep it to herself. ‘It’s never certain that anyone is going to Hell,’ she said more firmly, feeling that here at least she was on sure ground.<sup>118</sup>

This unorthodox belief of Dorothy’s shows her instinctive kindness, and also her perhaps overstated honouring of the second commandment: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself,”<sup>119</sup> promptly exploited by others, and no one as blatantly as the over-friendly Mr Warburton. It is also evidence that Dorothy does not need the threat of eternal demise in order to behave morally, which is one of the key aspects of her character, and the most important, perhaps, to Orwell personally, as he sketches the trials and tribulations of his hapless heroine further.

One of the peculiarities of Dorothy’s character is her dislike of sex and sexuality in general. Gordon Bowker in the biography *Inside George Orwell* offers an explanation that this side of Dorothy reflects Orwell’s relationship with Brenda, a woman he longed for but could never seduce.<sup>120</sup> He further explains that Orwell “was represented by the bohemian Mr Warburton” while Dorothy depicts Brenda who “had escaped from her home through teaching” and then “settled for a life of celibacy.”<sup>121</sup> As Dorothy is a naturally Christian soul and grew up learning the word of the Bible, her voluntary celibacy could be explained as a representation of the revered ascetic who is closer to Christ than a person who married another human being.<sup>122</sup> As April Kelly explores in her article on Christianity, St Augustine “encourages married

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<sup>116</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 67.

<sup>117</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 67.

<sup>118</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 68.

<sup>119</sup> Matthew 22:39.

<sup>120</sup> Gordon Bowker, *Inside George Orwell* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) 165.

<sup>121</sup> Bowker 165.

<sup>122</sup> April Kelly, “Early Christianity’s Concept of Sexuality,” Cbeinternational.org, *Priscilla Papers: The Academic Journal of CBE International*, 27 Jan 2019  
<<https://www.cbeinternational.org/resource/article/priscilla-papers-academic-journal/early-christianitys-concept-sexuality>> n.p. 12 Aug 2020.

couples to refrain from sexual intercourse, as a spiritual discipline” and finds it acceptable only in order to procreate.<sup>123</sup> Thus, Dorothy might be an exaggerated representation of an ideal Christian. There are several ways to explain why this trait does not disappear together with Dorothy’s faith, one of which would be the ridiculousness it would bring into the story. The cause of Dorothy’s disgust with sexual activity is explained in the novel as a childhood trauma which would be difficult to undo unless Orwell wished to keep Dorothy in partial memory loss. Of course, the Bowker’s explanation of parallel with life of Brenda is most plausible but in the concept of the story itself, unusable.

Orwell’s publisher, Victor Gollancz, was worried about *A Clergyman’s Daughter* possibly ending up in a libel case, as the original draft of the novel included swearwords and a rape scene, which needed to be taken out by the author in order to get the book published at all.<sup>124</sup> Orwell “agreed to make a number of small but widespread changes” and a revision of the fourth chapter “describing Dorothy’s life as a teacher.”<sup>125</sup> Finishing the changes in a fairly short time and “putting a good deal of effort into making these changes,” Orwell did not wish to continue working on his experimental novel and was willing to “withdraw the book from consideration” unless it got accepted in the form it was in at the time.<sup>126</sup> The disinterest with which Orwell regarded this particular novel stemmed from his growing dissatisfaction with it as he read and re-read *Ulysses* during its writing, only to end up with a feeling of “an inferiority complex.”<sup>127</sup> Michael Shelden claims it was wrong of Orwell to attempt to imitate Joyce, as “their talents had equipped them for different tasks.”<sup>128</sup>

The first chapter is the starting point of Dorothy’s journey, presenting her as a kind young woman who is, however, desperately trying to control her behaviour and thoughts as she deems necessary in order to obediently follow the principles of Christianity. After this chapter, Dorothy loses her memory and forgets not only her father and where she comes from but everything she has been taught until that point in her life. As a result, the protagonist does not find it strange to commit crime or beg. Until the moment her memories return, she is capable of behaving immorally but it is

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<sup>123</sup> Kelly n.p.

<sup>124</sup> Shelden 200.

<sup>125</sup> Shelden 200.

<sup>126</sup> Shelden 200-201.

<sup>127</sup> Shelden 186-187.

<sup>128</sup> Shelden 187.

the only time window she is allowed to do so by Orwell. However, the protagonist never loses her kindness, her only morally questionable behaviour being criminal acts that are invariably necessary for survival. During the time of her amnesia, a *tabula rasa* blankness, Dorothy can fully enjoy being surrounded by nature, unworried about anything more complicated than getting enough food to survive and to keep a roof over her head. She is enveloped by a community of people much more cheerful than the ones in her hometown, despite the fact that these are people on the outskirts of society – another signature Orwellian aspect. Another change comes after the hop-picking chapter, as with Dorothy's moral code back, she prefers to suffer alone over burdening anyone else. While she does realize her original religious belief is gone, she is forced to think about anything but that. Living on the streets for several days, the protagonist joins a group of people who lost their home as well, and suffers a lot of penury, at one point even coming very close to death. Once Dorothy gets arrested and released, she is saved at last thanks to her father's contacting his cousin and putting him in charge of Dorothy's rescue from the authorities. Another challenge for the protagonist is facing a class of young girls as a teacher while being underfed by the mean and money-grabbing school principal, Mrs Creevy. While the protagonist is naturally scared of the task before her, she soon finds out she has a talent for teaching, her kind enthusiasm at being able to be useful changing the dreary curriculum into a fun and effective one, bringing happiness to the children. However, she is soon met once again with harsh reality when the parents of the children are unsatisfied with her methods, forcing her into reverting back to the old useless methods over a so-called moral issue. In this part of her troubled journey through the layers of society, Dorothy is dying inside, seeing the unproductivity and dullness returning to the class. The children turn against her, feeling betrayed and driving the young woman to act against her best convictions, hitting one of the girls when she can no longer stand her predicament. While Dorothy does not lose her kind heart, the pressure of reality and frustration at being unable to change even the smallest part of the world are destroying her – and here Orwell is again strongly critiquing the harshness of the school system as well as the lack of any ethical concern or indeed sense of fairness – Mrs Creevy is only driven by personal profit in running her so-called school. In the end, Dorothy is miraculously saved by Mr Warburton right after losing her job and can at last draw a conclusion to her loss of faith and make sense of her newly acquired perception of the world. On the way back home, Dorothy realizes she feels no more



joy from nature and feels empty inside as she realizes at last there is a large hole in her heart where her religious faith once was. She is aware she will have to find a new way to live, yet she is too kind to admit her loss of faith to anyone but the happy-go-lucky atheist Mr Warburton, lest she should make someone lose a purpose in life like her. Orwell makes it quite clear in his novel that there is no happiness following the loss of false beliefs. Rather than some kind of revelation, all that is left is pain and sadness and coming to terms with the fact that no better future awaits Dorothy, as there is nothing on Earth that can truly replace faith.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Hollis Foreweord n.p.

### 3.4. Chapter 2

The second chapter starts as abruptly as the first one with Dorothy waking up on a busy street in London with no memories. There is no explanation as to of who she is or how she got there and she even has to remember the names for all the things she sees around herself. Soon she meets Nobby and his two companions, Charlie and Flo, who are on their way to hop fields to find themselves a job for the summer, whom she joins.

At his point, Dorothy undergoes something like a reset. As Orwell stated in his novel, had Dorothy had time to think for a moment longer about her situation, she most likely would “have gone to a police station and asked for assistance.”<sup>130</sup> By joining Nobby’s group, Dorothy was to experience life without the amenities of an anchored life, striving only to survive one day at a time. Orwell underwent several “tramping expeditions” of his own in the 1930s which he mainly explored in in writing in *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933).<sup>131</sup> He wished to truly understand the lives of the poor and collected material for his books at the same time, making Dorothy’s experience particularly vivid.<sup>132</sup>

From the moment Dorothy woke up without her memories, faith and God had no place in her life as the situation she found herself in did not allow her to think about something that complex:

In the strange, dirty sub-world into which she was instantly plunged, even five minutes of consecutive thought would have been impossible. The days passed in ceaseless nightmarish activity. Indeed, it was very like a nightmare; a nightmare not of urgent terrors, but of hunger, squalor, and fatigue, and of alternating heat and cold.<sup>133</sup>

In order to survive with no money, the group has to beg and steal. As stealing is a breach of the Ten Commandments, Dorothy’s old self would most likely be unable to accept it but Dorothy without her memories and knowledge of faith, the Church and the Bible’s teaching does not question the necessity of such action. As we can read in the story, Dorothy: “had no remembered past, no standards of comparison to make her ashamed of it. And yet with all their efforts they would have gone empty-bellied half

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<sup>130</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 86.

<sup>131</sup> Sheldon 120.

<sup>132</sup> Sheldon 121.

<sup>133</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 88.

the time if they had not stolen as well as begged.”<sup>134</sup> This demonstrates that the teaching of the Church, starting with the Ten Commandments, can be a luxury to follow and it would most certainly be too much of a luxury for the starving young woman. In this part of the story, Dorothy is doing what she finds natural to survive. The group of travellers can only depend on their own selves as there is no God to provide a miracle.<sup>135</sup> There is also this little satirical jab: “Nobby counted it a sin to pass a potato field without getting at least a pocketful.”<sup>136</sup> Obviously, the “sin” is not meant in a religious definition of the word but it is a nice way to play with words as people often tend to say it is a sin not to do something pragmatically useful or benefitting them directly.

From the group of travellers, Flo with Charlie were “cockneys born and bred,” who probably joined the group on a whim, and as they cannot stand the cold and hunger, they leave the group before getting to the hop fields.<sup>137</sup> While being in the same situation as Nobby and Dorothy, they still perceived themselves as better than their companions, in another of Orwell’s strategically placed critiques of the absurdities of the class system which perpetuates itself even in these dire, socially radically reduced circumstances:

Of course, having been ‘on the beach’ a comparatively short time, they looked down on Nobby and Dorothy. They valued Nobby’s knowledge of the road and his boldness in thieving, but he was their social inferior – that was their attitude. And as for Dorothy, they scarcely even deigned to look at her after he half-crown came to an end.<sup>138</sup>

Nobby was the experienced leader who would proudly say that he “would steal anything that was not tied down.”<sup>139</sup> Nobby accepted life as it came to him while keeping his cheerful attitude. The three characters are based on Orwell’s companions when he himself went hop picking in Kent.<sup>140</sup> One of his companions was an experienced thief called Ginger whom Orwell had to stop once from robbing a church.<sup>141</sup> Nobby is presented in a stark contrast not only to Charlie and Flo but also

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<sup>134</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 89.

<sup>135</sup> Sheldon 147.

<sup>136</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 90.

<sup>137</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 92.

<sup>138</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 92.

<sup>139</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 90.

<sup>140</sup> Sheldon 146.

<sup>141</sup> Sheldon 147.

to the clergy in Chapter 1. While Dorothy's father lived a fairly comfortable life with Dorothy doing most of the work for him, he was still pessimistic and hateful towards other people and never feeling any degree of happiness, except when remembering his "golden past."<sup>142</sup> Nobby is the complete opposite as, even though he went through a lot of bad experience in life, he still stayed cheerful and optimistic. Moreover, he is still kind to others as when the group has only "two large sacks" to sleep in, he is the one who "slept on the bare ground."<sup>143</sup> There is a clear satire in this as the clergy from Chapter 1, who are supposed to be kind, and showing people the love of God, were shown to have become members of the clergy for all the wrong reasons. They hardly had any love in their own hearts, making it impossible to give it to anybody else. Yet, the one who showed kindness was not anyone from the clergy but Nobby.

Once Dorothy and Nobby reach the hop fields, Dorothy notes that the hop-pickers look "happy" as they sit "round the fires with their cans of tea and their hunks of bread and bacon, in the smell of hops and wood smoke!"<sup>144</sup> They soon find a field they can work at and in the hut assigned to her, Dorothy meets her roommate as she collapses in the straw serving as bed:

'Ullo, mate!' she said. Jest about all in, ain't you, mate?'

'Yes, I'm tired – very tired.'

'Well, you'll bloody freeze in this straw with no bed-clo'es on you. Ain't you got a blanket?'

'No'

'Alf a mo, then. I got a poke' ere.'

She dived down into the straw and re-emerged with a hop-poke seven feet long.<sup>145</sup>

While the woman met Dorothy for the first time, she is already kind enough to share her makeshift blanker with her. Dorothy "for the first time becomes aware of the sense of solidarity which prevails among the poor."<sup>146</sup> The people in the hop-picking community are ready to help each other when necessary. There is again the contrast of the comradeship of the hop-pickers with the hostile environment of the Church in Chapter 1. The pickers live in bad conditions yet they are making the most of the time

<sup>142</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 29.

<sup>143</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 90-91.

<sup>144</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 98.

<sup>145</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 100.

<sup>146</sup> Hena Maes-Jelinek, "Criticism of Society in the English Novel Between the Wars: George Orwell," *OpenEdition Books* (Presses universitaires de Liège, 1970) <<https://books.openedition.org/pulg/883>> 337-402, paragraph 16, 12 Aug 2020.

spent in the fields, singing and laughing every day. The work itself is described as “exhausting” but giving one “physical joy” and “a warm satisfied feeling inside you.”<sup>147</sup> While Dorothy seemed to suffer rather than enjoy her parish work, she clearly enjoys to work outside in the field. The people coming to the hop fields are not educated, the gypsies even being proud of their inability to read.<sup>148</sup> Yet, there is much more happiness and love in this environment devoid of the teaching of the Bible. Moreover, the life in the hop fields does not allow for complex thoughts:

That was the natural effect of the life in the hopfields; it narrowed the range of your consciousness to the passing minute. You could not struggle with nebulous mental problems when you were everlastingly sleepy and everlastingly occupied [...]<sup>149</sup>

The work in the hop fields is hard and does not give one’s mind time to think about complex things. In this chapter, the pickers are doing their best to make ends meet, having to resort to stealing as well and they rely solely on their own abilities rather than depending on external power.

Dorothy regains her memories once Nobby gets arrested for stealing and it is not until several days after that she realizes she forgot to pray:

Prayer! For a very short time, a minute perhaps, the thought arrested her. Prayer – in those days it had been the very source and centre of her life. In trouble or in happiness, it was to prayer that she had turned. [...] Moreover, she was aware that she had no longer the smallest impulse to pray. Mechanically, she began a whispered prayer, and stopped almost instantly; the words were empty and futile. Prayer, which had been the mainstay of her life, had no meaning for her any longer.<sup>150</sup>

Dorothy only “recorded this fact” as if “in passing” and does not have time to think about “what it might mean,” as she was too preoccupied by the situation she found herself in.<sup>151</sup> She naturally wishes to return home, to the place and people she knows well but as she does not get immediate help from her impractical father, she has to survive on her own. However, Dorothy is too kind and selfless to choose the easier path for herself. While she stays for a night with the Turles family once the hop-

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<sup>147</sup> Daughter 105.

<sup>148</sup> Daughter 103.

<sup>149</sup> Daughter 112.

<sup>150</sup> Daughter 125-126.

<sup>151</sup> Daughter 126.

picking season is over, she opts for finding a paid room for herself over allowing herself to get help even when she desperately needs it. Moreover, once she could not pay for her room, she goes out to spend a night in the streets. The protagonist is only familiar with the small-town reality she grew up in, lacking the experience to survive in the city, and she often acts in her own naïve, honest way, which is most respectable from the Christian point of view but can pose great problems in reality – here Orwell again reminds us of the unfairness of life in a social critique and the relevant ethical concerns arising from these existential encounters during Dorothy's journey.

### 3.5. Chapter 3

Chapter 3 was Orwell's favourite part of the novel and at the time *A Clergyman's Daughter's* fate was still uncertain, he considered publishing the chapter as a standalone, salvaging at least a one part of his efforts.<sup>152</sup> In the end, the novel got published and the dramatic intermezzo imitating "Joyce's manipulations of disconnected dialogues in *Ulysses*" stayed a part of it.<sup>153</sup>

Once Dorothy completely runs out of money she ends up in Trafalgar square, having to endure adverse conditions she is unused to and ending up almost passing out from the freezing cold. Once again, Dorothy has to depend on the help of others in order to survive, as in the span of ten days she has to keep herself warm enough and beg enough money to buy herself some food. Contrary to the fairly happy community of hop pickers, the company of tramps roughing it at Trafalgar Square is not as jolly, drawing us deeper into Orwell's social critique. There are various reasons the novel provides as to what led these individuals to their life in the streets, giving these socially ostracised people a degree of background and restoring, at least in writing, their humanity.

Among the tramps are, for example, Snouter, who counts down the hours remaining until morning, Mrs Wayne, a woman of better upbringing and well-bred speech fallen on hard times, Mrs Bendigo, a cockney kicked out by her husband and left to fend for herself, and Mrs McElligot, a cockney Catholic who has lived on the streets for a long time and whose husband was most likely arrested for theft. Orwell clearly inserted this particular character into the group to give himself another opportunity to mock Roman Catholics. Mrs McElligot describes the life she led with her husband, unrepentant of breaking into houses and thievery, resulting in being rejected by a priest during the distribution of sacraments: "I took my sacraments reg'lar till de bloody priest wouldn't give me absolution along o' my Michael."<sup>154</sup> From Mrs McElligot's speech, there is no indication of any previous pursuit of spiritual knowledge, most likely taking the holy sacrament in sin, unconcerned about

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<sup>152</sup> Sheldon 201.

<sup>153</sup> Brennan 44.

<sup>154</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 157.

its spiritual significance and the need for genuine repentance before being allowed to take it.<sup>155</sup>

Another interesting character found among the London tramps is Mr Tallboys, who gradually changes over the course of the chapter. Initially, he reminisces of his past as a “Rector of Little Fawley-cum-Dewsbury.”<sup>156</sup> His memories paint an image of his own “golden past” similarly to how Dorothy’s father likes to remember his better times. In fact, were it not for Dorothy’s dutiful care, the Rector Hare would most likely end up in the same position, which makes Mr Tallboys into a broken mirror-image of Charles Hare, a warning, what-if scenario. Once the stage of reminiscence passes, the once Rector starts to mock-perform his past duties and chant. The chanting soon turns into curses, the once reverence of God turning into its malicious counterpart: “O all ye children of men, curse ye, the Lord, curse Him and vilify Him for ever!”<sup>157</sup> The once words of worship turn into vilification and the blessings turn to curses changing the holy words of the Bible into their unholy counterpart. Suddenly, “the language of the Lord’s Prayer” is inverted “echoing the blasphemies of a Black Mass.”<sup>158</sup> This disconcerting, if entertaining, change reflects how easily one can stop believing when one feels that the God one once believed in had abandoned him.

Mr Tallboys’s speech remains nonsensical until the end of the chapter but it clearly shows Orwell’s extensive knowledge of the Bible he acquired in his childhood, as well as reflecting the Joycean influence in this part of the novel. Moreover, through the clergyman’s half-delirious talk, Orwell mentions his future novel, *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, in an unobtrusive advertisement of his next work.

However, as the night progresses, Dorothy seems to be falling in and out of consciousness, and so part of the scene might be Dorothy’s hallucination or partially distorted view of reality. Christopher Hollis suggests the following scene might be a dream:<sup>159</sup>

As he reaches the first word of the prayer he tears the consecrated bread across. The blood

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<sup>155</sup> Larry Hiller, “When should I not take the sacrament?,” Churchofjesuschrist.org, *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints* <<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/new-era/1983/09/q-and-a-questions-and-answers/when-should-i-not-take-the-sacrament?lang=eng>> 12 Aug 2020.

<sup>156</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 138.

<sup>157</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 142.

<sup>158</sup> Brennan 44.

<sup>159</sup> Hollis V. n.p.



runs out of it. There is a rolling sound, as of thunder, and the landscape changes. Dorothy's feet are very cold. Monstrous winged shapes of Demons and Archdemons are dimly visible, moving to and fro. Something, beak or claw closes upon Dorothy's shoulder, reminding her that her feet and hands are aching with cold.<sup>160</sup>

The disjointed and iconoclastic imagery is followed by a policeman waking Dorothy up worriedly, telling her she is as "white as death."<sup>161</sup> While it may have been a nightmarish dream Dorothy slipped into, it is possible it was meant to portray a near-death experience, as the protagonist seems to be losing consciousness, conscious only of the creeping cold enveloping her. The images themselves then would be Dorothy's own biblical knowledge and the dire situation intertwining in a horrifying picture her mind made up in distress, physical and mental.

Dorothy is offered to be taken to the M.A.B., the Metropolitan Asylums Board, a hospital for "the destitute sick who needed institutional care" that existed from the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>162</sup> Once again, the protagonist is given the option of avoiding more suffering in the harsh winter cold but either due to her personality preventing her from leaving the ones who helped her stay alive in the hours spent in Trafalgar Square or simply out of fear induced by her half-awake state, she refuses the offer. The beggars then take refuge in a café whose owner is kind enough to let them warm themselves a little before opening again for customers in the morning.

Spending ten days living in the streets, Dorothy was never able to let go of her moral code, as she would never beg for money "except when hunger was past bearing or when got to lay in the precious penny that was the passport to Wilkin's café in the morning."<sup>163</sup> The protagonist is once again shown as extremely unwilling to burden others unless she is on the verge of physical collapse. The difference from her time of begging with Nobby is, as Dorothy herself notes, the fact that "she had not known what she was doing."<sup>164</sup> During the stage of memory loss, the protagonist lost awareness of what is right and wrong; she simply ended up doing whatever was needed to be done in order to survive. Once she regained her old self, the memory of

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<sup>160</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 157.

<sup>161</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 157.

<sup>162</sup> Gwendolyne M. Ayers, *England's First State Hospitals and the Metropolitan Asylums Board 1867-1930* (London: Wellcome Institute of the History Medicine, 1971) 1. 12 Aug 2020.

<sup>163</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 165.

<sup>164</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 165.

social moral norms returned, resulting in the young woman unable to bring herself to be a nuisance to anybody, as it goes against her own convictions and personality. In the end, as a “habitual beggar” flagged by police, Dorothy is arrested, and once released, saved at last by Blyth, the butler of her cousin.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 165.

### 3.6. Chapter 4

After the many trials and tribulations of the protagonist, the reader finally finds out the reaction of Charles Hare to his daughter's disappearance at the beginning of Chapter 4. As the Rector was incredibly spoiled by Dorothy and living in his own world because of Dorothy's never-ceasing hard work, he is shown to be enraged at his daughter's disappearance rather than worried for her safety. This further shows that he is a priest only in appearance but not at heart. Due to his upbringing and Dorothy's constant care, he never considered "that it is possible to starve if you have no money."<sup>166</sup> Being completely out of touch with reality, he is too late to prevent his daughter from having to live as a beggar in the streets but he is shown to possess some degree of compassion and love towards his child to sell a bit of his shares and ask his cousin for help.

However, as the rumours about Dorothy's disappearance are still alive in her hometown, she has to get a job and live on her own. Her cousin suggests that she should become a "companion to an old lady" in order to easily get a large sum of money in inheritance.<sup>167</sup> While many people would prefer to get a hold of a fortune without having to work too hard, Dorothy has no interest in getting rich. Her profoundly Christian sense of right and wrong does not desire material possessions. She needs to feel useful in order to feel her life has worth, and contrary to many characters in the novel, she is used to working hard and finds it rewarding in itself. In the end, Dorothy becomes a schoolmistress at a private school. Despite her original fear of being not qualified to teach, she soon proves herself to be a natural talent at teaching.

Orwell used his own experience from his job as a teacher at "the Hawthorns High School for Boys" in London,<sup>168</sup> as well as his memories from his studies at St Cyprian's, in the construction of the "Ringwood House Academy for Girls."<sup>169</sup> The principal of the school does not hide the fact that she has no interest in educating the children in her care. Throughout the chapter, she is portrayed as a malicious being living solely to make other people's lives miserable. The character seems to be an impersonation of Mr and Mrs Wilkes from St Cyprian's, drawn from the subjective

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<sup>166</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 169.

<sup>167</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 173.

<sup>168</sup> Sheldon 154.

<sup>169</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 175.

memories of young Eric Blair. As his autobiographical essay “Such, Such Were the Joys” is based on his memories from the time he was a little boy, it makes sense that the image of the teachers at the school would be distorted. However, Jacintha Buddicom in her book *Eric and Us* claims that the light Eric Blair portrayed himself in does not correspond to her memories of him and that he was trying “to out-do” Cyril Connolly’s version of St Cyprian’s, the “Dotheboys Hall” in his book *Enemies of Promise*.<sup>170</sup> Of course, even if Orwell’s own autobiographical essay was somewhat embellished, the image of Mr and Mrs Wilkes of “Such, Such Were the Joys” was clearly inspirational in the construction of the image of the despicable Mrs Creevy. The character is unrealistic and represents a greatly exaggerated version of the teachers of St Cyprian’s as Orwell himself remembered them. Similarly to the clergy of Chapter 1, the principal is mainly focusing on appearances and money: “After all, the fees *are* what matter, aren’t they?”<sup>171</sup> Michael Shelden describes the image of the school in his biography of George Orwell as “a scathing attack on the proprietors of such schools.”<sup>172</sup>

The system of punishments here again reflects the one in “Such, Such Were the Joys” as well, the entire institution revolving completely around money. The most important thing the chastising teacher needs to keep in mind is not to leave any evidence of physical abuse that the better-paying parents could see and not to give them a reason to take the child out of the school.

Christianity plays an important role in keeping appearances as well, however. While the principal asks about Dorothy’s religion, a very personal matter, she has no problem with going as far as choosing the church Dorothy should attend. Mrs Creevy is another character who attends church but does not believe its teachings and it never crosses her mind how important faith can be for someone. The only reason for her own attendance is for her to be seen as an obedient practising Christian:

Of religious belief she had not the smallest vestige. Her attitude towards religion, though she went to the Baptist Chapel every Sunday to impress the parents with her piety, was a mean anticlericalism founded on the notion that the clergy are only after your money. She seemed a creature utterly joyless, utterly submerged by the dullness of her existence.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Jacintha Laura May Buddicom, *Eric and Us* (London: Leslie Frewin Publishers Limited, 1974) 43.

<sup>171</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 178.

<sup>172</sup> Shelden 155.

<sup>173</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 192.

At this point, the starving and exhausted Dorothy has no remaining faith in herself, making this problem irrelevant for her, but her older self would be unable to accept that, as faith used to be one of her core parts. Therefore, the idea itself is a great attack on one's personal identity. This complete disregard of religion is also evident from "Mrs Creevy's own composition" of a bespoke prayer:<sup>174</sup>

[...]Make us to conduct ourselves quietly and obediently; look down upon our school and make it to prosper, so that it may grow in numbers and be a good example to the neighbourhood and *not a disgrace like some schools of which Thou knowest*, O Lord.[...]<sup>175</sup>

Mrs Creevy's malice is present even in the very prayer she devised, desecrating it in the process – Orwell's satirical eye is again unflinching here.

Dorothy soon finds out that her class has been taught almost nothing in their time spent at Ringwood House, and after receiving flowers from the girls she was to teach, a surge of compassion with the children makes her decide she would save the children from the dull curriculum. She finds a new purpose in her life after losing everything she has ever known, to the point of bordering on the messiah complex: "It was her vocation, she thought. [...] But this was more than mere job; it was – so it seemed to her – a mission, a life-purpose."<sup>176</sup> Dorothy feels fulfilled by helping others to the extent she finds enough strength in herself to withstand the malevolence of Mrs Creevy, her only companion apart from her students. Her natural ability to sympathize with the children, her compassion and altruistic enthusiasm is what makes her a good Christian without the need for religious formalities or any outer force making her behave in such a manner. She disregards her own needs and future as well, focusing solely on the futures of the girls in her care: "Her work was too absorbing, too all-important. In comparison with it, *her own comfort and even her future hardly seemed to matter*."<sup>177</sup>

Not long after starting the new curriculum, Dorothy has to face the unsatisfied parents of her students. Orwell again incorporated his own teaching experience here, as the parents of the boys he taught demanded mainly "'practical' subjects, such as

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<sup>174</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 183.

<sup>175</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 183, My emphasis.

<sup>176</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 200.

<sup>177</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 194, My emphasis.

arithmetic, spelling, grammar, handwriting – and for its snob appeal – French.”<sup>178</sup> The school he taught at aimed to prepare its students “for a place in a family business” rather than “further education.”<sup>179</sup> However, Orwell is said to have been a “strict teacher” who would, for example, teach French by the immersive method, forbidding the pupils from speaking in English for the duration of the class.<sup>180</sup> Dorothy is not portrayed as strict but rather a very idealistic image of a teacher who attends to her students individually and in a friendly manner. Once she gets scolded by Mrs Creevy and the parents for being a bad teacher for the lack of “practicality” in her methods, her soul is crushed, as she was giving so much love to the children only to be chastised for it. Dorothy is then forced to return to the old methods set by the principal, which aimed only on immediately visible results and cannot be considered teaching at all. Once again, there is a clear reflection of Orwell’s time spent at Hayes as he wrote about it:

There are wide gradations of income, but it is the same kind of life that is being lived at various levels, in labour-saving flats or Council houses, along the concrete roads and in the naked democracy of the swimming pools. It is a rather restless, cultureless life, centring round tinned food, Picture Post, the radio and internal combustion engine. It is a civilization in which children grow up with an intimate knowledge of magnetos and in complete ignorance of the Bible.<sup>181</sup>

Orwell is clearly criticizing the ignorance of parents who send their children to school only so they can show them off as educated. Once again, the matter seems exaggerated, as the parents do not notice their offspring is parroting the same French sentences all the time. One of Orwell’s old students stated that The Hawthorns was “just as dreary” as the “Ringwood House in *A Clergyman’s Daughter*.”<sup>182</sup> Orwell himself viewed the school as “a symbol of vulgar philistinism and greed.”<sup>183</sup>

Once Dorothy is faced with the reality that some people are content with being lied to as long as it is in accordance with what they wish to see, she feels that “the ‘talking to’ had quite broken her spirit.”<sup>184</sup> She feels that the experience “made

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<sup>178</sup> Shelden 156.

<sup>179</sup> Shelden 156.

<sup>180</sup> Shelden 156.

<sup>181</sup> Bowker 134-135.

<sup>182</sup> Bowker 135.

<sup>183</sup> Bowker 135.

<sup>184</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 209.

Trafalgar Square seem suddenly very much nearer,” even though she does not believe she will end up on the streets again, as she could ask her cousin for help again in the worst-case scenario.<sup>185</sup> However, Dorothy feels cold in her heart, as her purpose in life was brutally taken from her, which is only highlighted by Orwell’s setting of the whole scene of spiritual loneliness in chilly November. In the world revolving around money and devoid of faith, Orwell mockingly and crushingly presents the rule of survival in the language of the Bible: “It had driven into her a far deeper understanding than she had had before of the great modern commandment – the eleventh commandment which has wiped out all the others: ‘Thou shalt not lose thy job.’”<sup>186</sup>

The children were given a break from a dull routine in which some of them were kept for years, which only made it more painful when they were forced to return to it. Dorothy gave them hope and while she was forced to take it away rather than it being her own decision, the children aim their anger at her as they felt she had “deceived them.”<sup>187</sup>

There were times when Dorothy could keep her temper and forgive them all they did, because she realized that it was only a healthy instinct that made them rebel against the loathsome monotony of their work. But there were other times when her nerves were more on edge than usual [...] and [she] found possible to hate them. Children are so blind, so selfish, so merciless. They do not know when they are tormenting you past bearing, and if they did know they would not care. You may do your very best for them, you may keep your temper in situations that would try a saint, and yet if you are forced to bore them and oppress them, they will hate you for it without ever asking themselves whether it is you who are to blame.<sup>188</sup>

Dorothy is then once again shown to still be a human being, not a saint, after all, as one day she cannot control herself anymore and hits one of the girls, even though she believed it to be “an unforgivable thing to do, to hit a child.”<sup>189</sup>

Despite these new trials of patience and conscience, Dorothy is able to find a bit of “peace” for herself in visiting a local church every Sunday.<sup>190</sup> Orwell himself regularly spent time in church during his time teaching at Hawthorns for the same

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<sup>185</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 211.

<sup>186</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 211.

<sup>187</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 221.

<sup>188</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 221.

<sup>189</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 218.

<sup>190</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 220.

reason as Dorothy.<sup>191</sup> He befriended Ernest Parker, the curate of “St Mary’s, the local Anglican Church” and his visits gave him a chance to hold “intelligent conversation” and gave him access to a good library.<sup>192</sup> In Dorothy’s case, the church is a familiar environment, its atmosphere being “soothing and reassuring to her.”<sup>193</sup> While the protagonist is not yet at the point to fully reflect upon her loss of faith, she already knows that she will not give up churchgoing despite her no longer believing in God: “It seemed to her that even though you no longer believe, it is better to go to church than not; better to follow in the ancient ways, than to drift in rootless freedom.”<sup>194</sup> She already realizes her need for an anchor in life, a purpose.

Around Christmas time, Dorothy receives a letter from Mr Warburton at which she becomes enraged, as the pain she bears is proving to be too much to handle for her. Her old friend had been working on settling the matters in her hometown and the letter serves as foreshadowing of his arrival in the last chapter. Another letter, from her father, further gets rid of another obstacle preventing her return, as “it was evident from the tone of his letter that he had forgiven Dorothy by this time.”<sup>195</sup> However, the Rector has not undergone any change in personality or development of character, rather unsurprisingly, as until the very end of the novel, he does not fully believe Dorothy and changes nothing about the way he lives and behaves.

In the end, Dorothy befriends another teacher from a different school who represents the “decent” version of a teacher of a school built upon making money.<sup>196</sup> Orwell contrasts her with Dorothy’s predecessor, a woman who resorted to alcohol in order to survive the futility of her job. This way, he offers two routes available to Dorothy if she were to keep her job and venture upon meaningless survival. However, in order to complete the study of the loss of faith, Orwell has to remove Dorothy from the school, as the plotline offered no further development for her. Using Mrs Creevy to teach Dorothy the final lesson of capitalism’s sheer disposability of employees, the protagonist leaves the school to be finally allowed to go home.

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<sup>191</sup> Bowker 136.

<sup>192</sup> Bowker 136.

<sup>193</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 220.

<sup>194</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 220.

<sup>195</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 224.

<sup>196</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 229.



### 3.7. Chapter 5

In the final chapter of the novel, Dorothy is rescued by Mr Warburton, who tells her that she can return home at last, as the gossipy Mrs Semprill has been proved to have told only lies.

The time has come for Dorothy to draw her own conclusions after gaining eight months' worth of experience following her loss of faith. Christopher Hollis notes that this "dilemma" is "not only of Dorothy but of Orwell himself" as he did not believe in "a purely materialistic conception of man's life."<sup>197</sup> As the train brings Dorothy closer to her hometown, she tells Mr Warburton about her loss of faith. It is the second dialogue between Dorothy and Mr Warburton.

Dorothy realizes that she has changed, realizing there is a strange emptiness inside her heart:

The depressing hymn-line 'Change and decay in all around I see' moved through Dorothy's mind. It was true what she had said just now. Something had happened in her heart, and the world was a little emptier, a little poorer from that minute. On such a day as this, last spring or any earlier spring, how joyfully, and how unthinkingly, she would have thanked God for the first blue skies and the first flowers of the reviving year! And now, seemingly, there was no God to thank, and nothing – not a flower or a stone or a blade of grass – nothing in the universe would ever be the same again.<sup>198</sup>

The feeling of void in one's heart is actually a very natural thing. After she got lost, the young woman had to always do her best to survive in the unfamiliar environment she was thrown into. Finally, she got a chance to thoroughly think about what the abrupt loss of faith meant to her. As we saw in Chapter 1, faith played a guiding, overarching role in Dorothy's life, supplying meaning to the very experience of existence. Her community work and private thoughts used to always revolve around God and faith. Suddenly, this part of her own self is irretrievably gone and Dorothy is experiencing a disconcerting sense of an irredeemable void in her soul, a large hole she desperately needs to fill. Dorothy states that: "I've got to begin my life all over again,"<sup>199</sup> at which Mr Warburton is astonished, baffled to find she might regret her loss of faith, and he fails to understand how much Dorothy has really lost. Every

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<sup>197</sup> Hollis V. n.p.

<sup>198</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 241.

<sup>199</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 243.

single person naturally needs something that makes them want to continue living. It is in Mr Warburton's nature to live only for his own pleasure, but Dorothy, who had lived a life of self-sacrificing servitude, devoted to the whims of her selfish father and the duty to others, having also immersed herself in a particularly stringent sense of faith, a self-conscious habit of self-chastisement and self-harm, never lived like that and she would never be able to live like that, notwithstanding Mr Warburton's pragmatic arguments. Her life of misery and enduring self-sacrifice was made possible by her strong sense of belonging, that is in her faith, in her habitual inner dialogues with the Scripture and the belief in divine grace, manifest in everything beautiful in the world, mostly in nature. She tells Mr Warburton: "But how can one enjoy anything when all the meaning's been taken out of it?"<sup>200</sup> Dorothy used to accept the word of the Bible without question but it finally transpires that she needs to understand the deeper meaning of life and that makes her what could be called a true Christian. She is looking for the truth and as such could be considered an ideal Christian, someone who is not looking for comfort but rather the pure meaning of life. However, Orwell has taken God away from Dorothy, showing that in order to desire truth and live an honest life, one does not need God or religious doctrine:

[...]Everything that I'd believed in till then – everything – seemed suddenly meaningless and almost silly. God – what I'd meant by God – immortal life, Heaven and Hell – everything. It had all gone. And it wasn't that I'd reasoned it out; it just happened to me. It was like when you're a child, and one day, for no particular reason, you stop believing in fairies. I just couldn't go on believing it any longer.<sup>201</sup>

The religious teaching was never a natural part of Dorothy. Mr Warburton tells Dorothy, in a stereotypical assumption of a non-believer, that she was "far too intelligent" to believe in the words of priests.<sup>202</sup> By comparing religion to the belief in fairies, Orwell is pointing out how ridiculous he finds it – or, perhaps, how the belief in something larger than the world around us is made difficult with more intense life experience or perhaps the exposure to the ways of the world. Both Dorothy and Mr Warburton are intelligent enough to disregard the fairy tale, the construct of religion,

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<sup>200</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 243.

<sup>201</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 241-242.

<sup>202</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 242.

yet Mr Warburton represents the majority of people who live only for themselves and do not feel the need to look for the meaning of life:

He was quite incapable of realizing how a mind naturally pious must recoil from a world discovered to be meaningless. Even the loathsome platitudes of the pantheists would be beyond his understanding. Probably the idea that life was essentially futile, if he thought of it at all, struck him as rather amusing than otherwise.<sup>203</sup>

In a way, Dorothy's mind has been freed from the stifling grasp that religion, which was imposed on her for years, had on her – although we have to note here that the perfunctory sense of religion as more of a misguided performance of class superiority than anything remotely spiritual that her father has been the example of is very far indeed from what Christianity is supposed to be about. However, to acquire some sense of a new meaning in life and to figure out one's own beliefs, independent of a guiding principle such as God, takes time and Dorothy has to decide what she is going to do until then. The only solution she sees for herself at this particular moment is to return to her old way of life and try to pretend that her faith has never gone away, rather than admit that she has lost her faith and become an "unbeliever".<sup>204</sup>

[...] Perhaps it's better to be a hypocrite – that kind of hypocrite – than some things'

'Why do you say that kind of hypocrite? I hope you don't mean that pretending to believe is the next best thing to believing?'

'Yes... I suppose that' what I do mean. Perhaps it's better – less selfish – to pretend one believes even when one doesn't, than to say openly that one's an unbeliever and perhaps turn other people into unbelievers too.'<sup>205</sup>

Obviously, Mr Warburton cannot understand this line of reasoning at all. After everything Dorothy went through (begging, hunger, sleeping in cold, arrest, unjust accusations) and her great change in thinking in general, why would she ever want to pretend to believe? Yet, it is quite easy to answer this fundamental question. Dorothy feels there is a big hole in her heart and she is utterly lost. She no longer sees any meaning in life, which could easily translate to no desire to live. People need an anchor in their lives, something to drive them to continue living in a meaningful

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<sup>203</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 244.

<sup>204</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 244.

<sup>205</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 244.

manner. As Dorothy lost this vital anchor, in her own kind-hearted nature she is afraid that she might make someone else lose the meaning of their life as well if she comes clean about her loss of faith. Even though she understands that faith does not offer the real truth, it certainly still helps one live according to certain principles and feel like one belongs in a wider, like-minded community. It provides the anchor, the meaning to life, although Orwell's unflinching portrait of the church in rural England, be it Anglican or Catholic, and its caricatured congregations comes across as pompous, and ultimately false to the principles of Christianity itself. Dorothy remembers the joy she felt and her abiding appreciation of life while she still believed in God. Losing false illusions did not bring Dorothy happiness or better understanding of the world; it only made everything sadder for her. Thus, she cannot bring herself to take it away from anyone else. All she can say in her defence in front of the cynical man in front of her is: "But I suppose it comes naturally to me."<sup>206</sup> Indeed, it is the most natural instinct for Dorothy, her Christian kindness. Orwell even invents a name for the newly un-Christian Christian that Dorothy has become, putting it in the words of the sceptical Mr Warburton:

‘What you’re trying to do, apparently,’ pursued Mr Warburton, ‘is to make the worst of both worlds. You stick to the Christian scheme of things, but you leave Paradise out of it. And I suppose, if the truth were known, there are quite a few of your kind wandering about among the ruins of the C. o. A. You’re practically a sect in yourselves,’ he added reflectively ‘*the Anglican Atheists*’<sup>207</sup>

As Dorothy's future seems already outlined, Mr Warburton gives her one last chance to escape her fate by asking Dorothy to marry him. He tells her what awaits her if she does not marry and Dorothy is for a moment seized by existential dread at the “forbidding future.”<sup>208</sup> Orwell suggests there are two reasons for Dorothy's refusal of the offer. First of all, it was still more natural for Dorothy to accept that bleak future of spinsterish servitude and financial penury than to accept the offer of marriage on purely pragmatic terms which would bring her “back to the world of friendly and desirable things – to security and ease, to comely houses and good clothes, to books

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<sup>206</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 245.

<sup>207</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 245, My emphasis.

<sup>208</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* 250.

and friends, to summer and distant lands.”<sup>209</sup> She could never accept the easy life as it would not be beneficial for anyone but Dorothy herself – also, rather crucially, the man in question, Mr Warburton, is old and physically quite repellent, which makes any idea of physical intimacy quite impossible. Orwell emphasizes, however, that Dorothy needs to feel useful in life, to make sense of she is doing even if it means she herself has to suffer. The part that cannot be taken from her soul is the very deeply ingrained Christian nature, the need to help others and to do what makes sense to her in this respect. The life Mr Warburton offers her would be good enough for many women but never for the naturally pious young woman, or indeed any fundamentally independent human being. Moreover, some of the jobs that are being considered by both characters for Dorothy, “a nursery governess” or returning “back to school-teaching,” in order to secure her future after her father passes away and she loses the meagre financial means the household has been surviving on, seem to fit her best, as they give her an opportunity to be useful and engage in further self-sacrifice.<sup>210</sup>

As hinted above, the second reason for Dorothy’s refusal of Mr Warburton’s proposal is her fear of the sexual act as well as her rather unfortunate experience of any inkling of such matters, instigated under false pretences by Mr Warburton’s original advances, as we discussed in Chapter 1. This encounter and its aftermath results in the strange, experimentally written, disjointed core of the novel, where Dorothy is wandering in the various urban and rural wildernesses and other, among strange companionship of misfits. These chapters are also clearly based on Orwell’s own experiences among destitute menial labourers and the homeless, committed to writing in his famous *Down and Out in Paris and London* two years earlier,<sup>211</sup> or, in another, this time a North-England setting, set among industrial workers, two years later, in *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937).<sup>212</sup> We now know that the omission of the logical link between Dorothy’s fleeing Mr Warburton’s in the evening and waking up with amnesia on the streets of London some days later (the link is explored and exploited by Mrs Semprill’s scandalous gossip about Dorothy in the novel), i.e. the act of sexual violence and the subsequent ‘dumping’ of Dorothy on a street in London,

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<sup>209</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 250.

<sup>210</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 249.

<sup>211</sup> Shelden 132.

<sup>212</sup> Brunsdale 76.

was due to censorship and editorial guidance, due to the threat of libel and other legal complications.<sup>213</sup>

A week after Dorothy returns home, she is still thinking about what the future holds for her. As any living and thinking creature, she worries about her future existence. Yet she is firm in her belief that poverty “didn’t matter!”<sup>214</sup> Rather than being preoccupied with worldly things, in the last pages of the novel, she is trying to find the answer to the meaning of life.

She began to meditate upon the nature of life. You emerged from the womb, you lived sixty or seventy years, and then you died and rotted. And in every detail of your life, if no ultimate purpose redeemed it, there was a quality of greyness, of desolation, that could never be described, but which you could feel like a physical pang at your heart. Life, if the grave really ends it, is monstrous and dreadful. [...] Surely only fools or self-deceivers, or those whose lives are exceptionally fortunate can face that thought without flinching?<sup>215</sup>

In the face of such an existential predicament, Dorothy realizes that “Faith vanishes, but the need for faith remains the same.”<sup>216</sup> Faith gave Dorothy the meaning of life, a “purpose in the world which you can serve.”<sup>217</sup> That is something Dorothy naturally needs and goes as far as to try and bring faith back to her by praying:

‘Lord, I believe, help Thou my unbelief. Lord, I believe, I believe; help Thou my unbelief.’

It was useless, absolutely useless. Even as she spoke  
the words she was aware of their uselessness, and was half ashamed of her action.<sup>218</sup>

Unsurprisingly, there is no God to give Dorothy the meaning of life at the end of Orwell’s novel. Having come back full circle after what truly was a series of extraordinary episodes and sketches of alternative lives and possible fates, the most realistic, perhaps, being her unsuccessful stint at Mrs Creevy’s boarding school, she cannot return to where she once was and all she can do is to try and move forward. Dorothy could find “no solution” to her questions and at the end of the novel, she is

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<sup>213</sup> Penguin.co.uk, *Penguin Books Ltd.* <<https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/104/1042940/a-clergyman-s-daughter/9781787301214.html>> 12 Aug 2020.

<sup>214</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 257.

<sup>215</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 258.

<sup>216</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 258.

<sup>217</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 258.

<sup>218</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 260.

still unable to fill the void in her heart.<sup>219</sup> There is a “deadly emptiness” inside Dorothy, the “personal need for faith” still remaining “undiminished.”<sup>220</sup> In this respect, the novel reflects the infinite search for the meaning of life of humankind. The Church offers an easy socio-cultural solution but in reality, there is no answer to the question, no philosophical depth, no solace of grace. Orwell’s unusual heroine arrives at the following conclusion:

The smell of glue was the answer to her prayer. She did not know this. She did not reflect, consciously, that the solution to her difficulty lay in accepting the fact that there was no solution; that if one gets on with the job that lies to hand, the ultimate purpose of the job fades into insignificance; that faith and no faith are very much the same provided that one is doing what is customary, useful, and acceptable. She could not formulate these thoughts as yet, she could only live them. Much later, perhaps, she would formulate them and draw comfort from them.<sup>221</sup>

George Orwell returned Dorothy to her old life, stripped her of religion, perceived in the novel as a largely meaningless man-made construct if the clergy or the congregation do not actually live according to Christianity’s basic principles, and presented her as a person naturally desiring to find the meaning of life yet never consciously finding the answer, just continuing to look for it. As Brennan writes in *George Orwell and Religion* “there is no realistic substitute for personal faith” yet it “can never be understood.”<sup>222</sup> Dorothy’s search, and consequently the answer, becomes the simplicity of daily tasks in the service of her immediate community, a deeply Christian impulse which resonates with doleful Orwellian irony. Perhaps, in line with Christian doctrine, mankind is not meant to know the answer to that question. Humans can only accept their place in the world and in nature, and try to bring out the best in themselves and others to make the world a little better. In this respect, Orwell’s conclusion to Dorothy’s spiritual journey appears less sketchy or “garbled”,<sup>223</sup> to use the word he described his own novel which he ended up suppressing future editions of in his own lifetime, and more keenly empathetic and also deeply moving. Dorothy becomes, to paraphrase Orwell’s own words, a study in

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<sup>219</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 259.

<sup>220</sup> Brennan 45.

<sup>221</sup> Orwell, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* 261.

<sup>222</sup> Brennan 45.

<sup>223</sup> Penguin.co.uk, *Penguin Books Ltd.* <<https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/104/1042940/a-clergyman-s-daughter/9781787301214.html>> 12 Aug 2020.

that “‘highly religious sense of morality’” which remains after the loss of faith itself, making this obscure novel a part of the author’s broader, deeper search for a “‘morality suitable for a post-Christian age.’”<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> Brennan x.



#### **4. Conclusion**

Dorothy was unable to find any higher meaning of life, but she started on a new introspective journey, coming to terms with the limits of human understanding. While George Orwell himself could not find the answer he was looking for, he created an ideal, inherently moral character in no need of imposed moral rules as her innate ones are enough in themselves. While most people would continue living their lives similarly to Mr Warburton, satisfied with the comforts of the material world and their short lives spent in everyday reality, there will always remain the few who similarly to Dorothy search for deeper understanding of the meaning of their existence and who do not disregard their soul. Orwell was correct when he worried about the consequences of the loss of control belief in God had over people, as is illustrated by Mrs Creevy. Once people stop worrying about consequences their actions could have, they lose moral borders which keep their behaviour under control. Mrs Creevy's malicious behaviour is fearless as she does not believe in the consequences of her selfish actions in the afterlife and human law enforcement does not have any power over her particular petty malice. Many people need to see the prospect of punishment clearly in order to behave decently. However, there always will be people who have it in their innate nature to be just, helpful and desiring knowledge. Dorothy Hare is an exaggerated example, an ideal, but not a completely unrealistic figure. As for the search for the meaning of life, George Orwell is a realist, after all, and so are many others who, in spite of the unattainable truth, will continue their search for it regardless, perhaps finding, like Dorothy, deeper meaning in the very simple tasks of everyday life, rather than in the confines of morally corrupt institutions.

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